

27. May 2022

Europe/International

## **German-French Societies NRW meet in Bocholt**

### **Focus topic "Digitization in town twinning and association work".**

The German-French Society Bocholt e.V. (DFG) in cooperation with the Association of German-French Societies for Europe e.V. (VDFG) invited to this year's regional conference in the European City of Bocholt. Representatives from the various Franco-German member societies and interested members of the public gathered information on the key topic of "Digitization in town twinning and association work".

The meeting venue was the LWL-TextilWerk Bocholt. There, the president of the DFG Bocholt, Wilfried Flüchter, welcomed the attendees. He was pleased that this conference could now take place again in Bocholt after 2019. Jochen Hake, Vice President of the VDFG, also spoke a word of welcome. The DFG Bocholt had invited to the regional meeting on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the European City of Bocholt and the 50th anniversary of the twinning with Aurillac and Arpajon-sur-Cère (France). The group "Zeligs" played French chansons as a prelude.

### **Guests of honor at regional meeting**

Numerous guests of honor came to the event in Bocholt. The outgoing French Consul General at the French Consulate General in Düsseldorf, Dr. Olivia Berkeley-Christmann, gave a welcoming speech, as did Dr. Dominic Fanatico, Head of Office II of the Franco-German Cultural Plenipotentiary, Prime Minister Henrik Wüst (Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Germany for Cultural Affairs under the Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation). Mayor Thomas Kerkhoff also welcomed those present and reported, among other things, on the European city festival that Bocholt had just celebrated.

### **Focus on digitalization**

The main topic for this year's annual meeting was digitalization in the context of town twinning and association work. "The Corona pandemic has presented us with new challenges and opportunities here," said Wilfried Flüchter. At the meeting, there were therefore not only technical presentations, but also a so-called "World Café". Here, the participants listed the events they had held in the last two years during the Corona pandemic in Presence. The second round then began to consider how these events could be transferred to digital life. There was no shortage of creativity and tips during this informal exchange. Numerous good examples came together at this point in the program.

### **Presentations on funding opportunities and institutions**

In the rest of the program, Dr. Margarete Mehdorn, VDFG President, presented the Franco-German Citizens' Fund. This low-threshold funding pot, designed for intergenerational cooperation, helps to organize Franco-German projects. There were further expert presentations on funding opportunities and institutions, with Beate Brockmann presenting the network office for town twinning in North Rhine-Westphalia (Dortmund). Luise Böttcher, Leipzig, from the German-French Youth Committee - DFJA, gave a presentation on the topic of "Moving into digital twinning work". On the occasion of the EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2022, Florian Staudt, member of the European Commission's EUROPE DIRECT Speakers Pool Team, gave the lecture: "The French EU Council Presidency: Ambitions in challenging times".

### **Supporters and sponsors**

This year's VDFG regional conference in the European City of Bocholt was supported by the Franco-German Civic Foundation and the Heimatscheck from the funding program "Heimat. Future. North Rhine-Westphalia. We promote what connects people."



*Bocholts Bürgermeister Thomas Kerkhoff bei der VDFG-Regionaltagung der deutsch-französischen Mitgliedsgesellschaften NRW im LWL-TextilWerk Bocholt.*

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